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ABSTRACT

Managing cultural diversity is recognized as one of the most pressing challenges to be faced in the 21st century by development communication scholars and practitioners. Meeting that challenge requires formulation of communication concepts, theories and practices which enable sharing and blending diversity among the world's multi-communal, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religion, multi-familial communities and peoples. A "Cultural Renewal Model" can become the action framework for sharing and blending diversity through participatory communication at the local community level. The model incorporates a dialogic process at the local level in formulating common goals for both economic and cultural development, and utilizes participatory research methods. "Cultural Renewal" is operationalized as a systematic self-examination of heritage and human ecology at all levels of community. Cultural renewal takes a holistic view of communities assessing their cultural context through participatory research, critical reflection, and analysis. Participatory communication holds potential for reducing the possibility of destructive conflict between groups, between communities, between nations whether powerful or powerless. Participatory communication reinforces the purposes of liberation, freedom, justice, and egalitarian ideologies--all related to issues of diversity. It not only enables people to become partners in communication decision making but simultaneously provides a process which facilitates development of communication competencies. (Contains 47 references and a figure illustrating the cultural renewal model.) (Author/RS)

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# Cultural Renewal: an Operational Model for Sharing Diversity through Participatory Communication

*by*

*Shirley A. White and K. Sadanandan Nair*

a conceptual paper
for presentation to the
44th annual conference of the
**Intercultural and Development Communication Division**
**International Communication Association**
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*Sage Publications has two recent book releases edited by White and Nair. These volumes contain important theoretic contributions from their research. These books are titled: Perspectives on Development Communication and Participatory Communication: Working for Change and Development. A third release which contains complete documentation of their six--year collaborative research on development communication in rural Maharashtra, India is forthcoming from Sage later this year.*

ABSTRACT

Cultural Renewal: an Operational Model
for Sharing Diversity
through Participatory Communication

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Managing **cultural diversity** is recognized as one of the most pressing challenges to be faced in the 21st century by development communication scholars and practitioners. Meeting that challenge requires formulation of communication concepts, theories and practices which enable sharing and blending diversity among the world's multi-communal, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religion, multi-familial communities and peoples. This paper outlines the **Cultural Renewal Model** which can become the action framework for sharing and blending diversity through participatory communication at the local community level. The model incorporates a dialogic process at the local level in formulating common goals for both economic and cultural development. It utilizes participatory research methods.

**Cultural renewal** is operationalized as a systematic self-examination of heritage and human ecology at all levels of **community**. Cultural renewal takes a holistic view of communities assessing their cultural context through participatory research, critical reflection and analysis. Diverse cultural groups within a community then engage in a dialogic, transactional, participatory communication process, aimed at problem solving through negotiation and consensus. This process establishes new normative structures which are liberating, emancipating and egalitarian for the participating cultural groups.

**Participatory communication** holds potential for reducing the possibility of destructive conflict between groups, between communities, between nations whether powerful **or** powerless. Participatory communication reinforce the purposes of liberation, freedom, justice, and egalitarian ideologies -- all related to issues of diversity. It not only enables people to become partners in communication decision making but simultaneously provides a process which facilitates development of communication competencies.

**Cultural Renewal: An Operational Model**
**for Sharing Diversity**
**through Participatory Communication**

## Addressing Issues of Diversity Via Cultural Renewal

Managing *cultural diversity* is recognized as one of the most pressing challenges to be faced in the 21st century by development communication scholars and practitioners. Meeting that challenge requires formulation of communication concepts, theories and practices which enable sharing and blending diversity among the world's multi-communal, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religion, multi-familial communities and peoples. The need to express one's culture, one's ethnicity or one's heritage would seem to be a constant driving force for people to communicate and arrive at better ways to live together.

Unmistakably, effective intercultural communication and prudent use of available communication technologies can be the means for preserving indigenous cultures, for modifying or sharing cultural tradition or for facilitating *fusion* of cross-cultural perspectives. If through development processes peaceful communities and compatible cultures can be structured in the future, rethinking "western views" about the relationship between communication and diversity will be necessary. This reexamination would include developing and employing participatory communication approaches to shape that relationship and to meet goals.

Our thinking regarding *cultural renewal* as a viable model for participatory development communication contributes one useful perspective as to how communication processes can be interfaced with development processes which recognize the critical impact of diversity on people's ability to communicate. Additionally, thinking regarding *participatory communication* suggests the need to transform the top-down models of

communication into "transactional" models which are highly dialogic in nature and which facilitate "knowledge/information sharing" among co-equal and co-empowered communicating parties. The theory of participatory development as cultural renewal, along with several other fresh approaches including *participatory message development*, appears in a new book from Sage Publications, Inc. titled Participatory Communication: Working for Change and Development (White, Nair and Ascroft:1994).

**The Cultural Renewal Perspective**

*Cultural renewal* is operationalized as a systematic self-examination of heritage and human ecology at all levels of *community*. Nair and White (1994) define the concept of *cultural renewal* as a "dynamic process of goal-oriented cultural and structural change." This change is facilitated by "pro-active indigenous communication transactions" which take place among people who interact with one another in the community where they live. This community may have a specific cultural context but is part of a larger village/town, region, state and nation. The *cultural renewal process* is one which identifies needed changes and confronts the forces which facilitate or impair bringing about these changes. Alternatives for local action are outlined along with action alternatives which enable the appropriate course of action for implementing the change. The shared common goal for the diverse sub-groups within the community is to provide a framework for preserving cultural identity and integrity, at the same time promoting intercultural harmony.

The theoretic perspective of *cultural renewal* recognizes all cultures as dynamic -- constantly changing -- and almost always experiencing conflict. The *cultural renewal* operationalization presented later in this paper outlines a systematic way to reshape and accelerate forces which have potential to transform the social context. The transformation aims to provide equal human rights for all people and access to both

endogenous and exogenous resources which are necessary for culturally sensitive development. When local people are involved in this process, cultural practices would be reformulated and renewed through a deliberate course of action controlled by the people themselves. Conscious effort would be made to maintain the uniqueness of sub-cultures within a community and at the same time build a shared social cultural foundation which blends and harmonizes diversity and commonality. The people will determine the course of their own lives, and remove barriers which they feel will be a roadblock to the changes which they decide to make. Through ongoing participation and interaction among people of diverse ethnic or cultural groups, social transformation will gradually come about.

The idea of bringing about cultural renewal through participative communication should not be interpreted as forced cultural change. Rather, it is working toward a community structure and an integral communication system which will facilitate transactional communication and enable people to bring about change which incorporates common perspectives but does not necessarily eliminate or alter diversity. Focused cultural change through renewal approaches is nurtured from within the community utilizing indigenous knowledge and resources. This, in turn generates power and decision-making capacity among the people.

In the past "directed cultural change" has been questioned and resisted because in most cases it was imposed by external "interventionists" who often offended basic beliefs of people in the community. In the case of imposed technological changes, often people have not been able to see the relevance or application of the technology because the advantage of the innovation was not understood. But often technological innovations were not appropriate or were in conflict with on-going practices. Even more critical is the fact that technology has often impacted negatively on the cultural roots of the community (Stevenson:1988).

**The Participatory Communication Perspective**

Nair and White (1987a) define participatory development communication as a two-way, dynamic interaction, between "grass-roots" receivers and the "information" source, mediated by development communicators as renewal facilitators. They articulate a transactional communication model which focuses on the need for the people and the external "development bureaucracy" to interact and become interdependent in addressing Third World development issues. Their model facilitates participation of grass roots people as indigenous decision-makers and points up the need for more equalitarian communication systems for dissemination of information and access to resources which would facilitate ongoing dialogue regarding development issues (Nair and White 1987b, 1993, 1994).

*Cultural renewal* is proposed by Nair and White (1994) as an umbrella concept or frame of reference for participatory development communication. Such a notion provides a fresh viewpoint about the meaning of culture which can open significant reflection, rethinking and redefinition of the impact of development on blending and maintaining diversity. Casmir (1991) hopes that newer cultural paradigms would stimulate new societal models. The "third cultures," from his perspective, would result from "deliberate communication effort, over time, by all those involved in developing the basis for mutual trust, respect and meaningful interactions." He suggests that interaction and negotiation must take place among cultures without dominance or assimilation. Casmir points out that:

> Unless a unifying model is found which makes possible development without repression or domination, we may continue to fumble in the dark. Observation of actual processes used by various cultures which come into contact with a shared environment and which resolve their difficulties to achieve mutual survival could be highly instructive (p. 14).

*Cultural renewal* then is not a return to ancient traditions but instead *a participatory process* which overcomes barriers of traditional cultural values and their accompanying

societal norms and structures. Through participation and interaction of diverse cultures, local communities are revitalized through identifying a shared, universal value frame of reference which is not repressive and can be adapted to local ecosystems.

**Blending Diversity through Community Action**

That development must meet the challenge of blending diversity without destroying cultural identity and important traditions is a generally agreed upon principle. However, one does not necessarily find agreement as to how to operationalize that principle within a holistic framework for community action. What approach to community action will enable oppressed segments of society to shape their own destiny? *We propose that this can be done by generating indigenous sources of knowledge and power which, in turn, catalyze development processes and produce ecosensitive outcomes.*

The UNESCO MacBride Report (1980) noted the importance of strengthening cultural identity :

> Promoting conditions for the preservation of the cultural identity of every society is necessary to enable it to enjoy a harmonious and creative inter-relationship with other cultures. It is equally necessary to modify situations in many developed and developing countries which suffer from cultural dominance (p. 259).

Strengthening self-reliance and interdependence in order for people to collectively achieve their "inalienable right to a better life....a social minimum" is pointed up as an important consideration in the MacBride Report. Communication policy changes would be necessary to guide "determination of information and media priorities" and to plan "installation and development of adequate infrastructures to provide self-reliant communications capacity." This implies that education for community action would be an integral part of the public information system:

> Freedom of information....the right to seek, receive and impart information....is a fundamental human right; indeed, a prerequisite for many others (p. 253).
>
> ... a high value should be attached to the many examples of "alternative communication," which operates horizontally instead of vertically and enables individuals to assume an active role in the communication process... liberating people's initiatives ...(to) the right to know...the right to impart....the right to discuss...the right to privacy (p.113).

We think that a sound foundation for participative communication in a community which utilizes key recommendations of the MacBride Commission is yet to be built. Successful facilitation of community communication which handles issues of diversity, we believe, requires a plan for increasing communication competencies of all the people. Cultures are dynamic and rapidly evolving, reflecting the lightning pace of technological change --- particularly in communication technology. We also believe that it is now possible, perhaps a mandate, to devise a conscious mechanism for re-shaping culture, expressing mutuality and acknowledging diversity. Through utilization of appropriate communication theory and technology we can bring about the "third culture," to use Casmir's terminology, i.e., bring about mutually developed and accepted patterns of interaction among culturally diverse groups or nations (Casmir:1991).

**Toward Participative and Renewing Models**

Another Development, i.e., "develop in your own way," introduced a new value orientation to Third World development which implies that all societies would be able to arrive at that "own way" collectively (Nerfin, 1977). In reality, this means that complexities at all structural levels -- social, economic, political -- will arise. Searching for a framework for addressing these complexities requires practical as well as theoretical consideration. This is the task for creating participative and renewing

models. Such models will incorporate concepts such as *self-reliance, diversity, power generation and/or sharing, participative communication environments, and shared human values.*

Kothari (1988) notes in his discussion of development and issues of the environment that:

> The need...is for greater *self-reliance* in every locale, maximum utilization of nature's resources for productive use at decentralized levels, and the orientation of scientific effort to the problems of the common man. Only thus would Gandhi's vision of not only production for the masses but also by the masses be realised (p. 60).

This notion of self-reliance recognizes the plight of the common (wo)man. This in turn implies the need not only to promote concern for their problems but also the responsibility for creating a system which enables the development of human potentials -- production "by the masses." Galtung (1980) has articulated a comprehensive theoretical rationale for self-reliance as a goal in development and presents *self-reliance* as an economic factor. He notes that: "Self-reliance ultimately means that the society is organized in such a way that the masses arrive at self-fulfillment through self-reliance -- in participation with others in the same situation (p.401). We suggest that catalyzing renewal processes through participatory communication will ultimately result in increased self-reliance of individuals and communities and bring about not only awareness of diversity but also the ability to resolve problems which result from diversity of any kind.

*Blending diversity* implies the necessity of *altering power relationships.* Critical theorists (Bourdieu:1990, Foucault:1980, Habermas:1989) present interesting viewpoints on power. They view power as a coincidence -- not necessarily a carefully planned strategy. Power just "happens." They note that some people have power and others do not; an imbalance of power leads to conflict which results from competing interests. Such conflicts of interest require on-going mediation which would

result in both *power sharing* and changes in social structures. *Power for the powerless* would emerge through their becoming more self-reliant and speaking with their own "voice." Foucault noted that in seeking to understand power one should "proceed from a micro-level, ascending rather than descending" and seek to track its diffusion, descent, extension and effectiveness throughout society (Smart, 1983:73-107). Thus, people who are powerless could possibly gain enough power to bring about a change in normative structures in the culture.

> Because human beings find themselves in a complex set of forces in their natural environment as well as a social context, it is not surprising that they see themselves as ruled by others, without influence and often dependent and helpless. Caught in the web of complexity, constraints, coercion, and competition, they must develop their own survival tactics and control their own destiny. They do this through group relationships and processes which in turn gives them a sense of self-confidence, self-reliance and self-worth which enables higher level of trust within the group --- a sense of creation and control, rather than suppression and powerlessness (Nair and White:1994:185).

Giddens (1984) talks about the "causal powers" possessed by human beings -- the capacity to "intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs." We regard power as the ability of individuals or a group of individuals to think for themselves, recognize diversity and its consequences, define their own life goals and initiate the course of action necessary for cultural renewal.

The *communication environment* which recognizes, tolerates, and blends cultural diversity is one which is highly democratic and participative. *Participatory communication* holds potential for reducing the possibility of destructive conflict between groups, between communities, between nations whether powerful *or* powerless. Participatory communication reinforce the purposes of liberation, freedom, justice, and egalitarian ideologies -- all related to issues of diversity. These ideological

preferences to some degree reflect emerging *universal value frameworks* (Kothari:1988).

The matter of *values*, i.e., those strongly held beliefs which anchor human behavior and communication, can be understood in relation to a goal of universality. While values are configured differently in every culture, many are linked to kinship or ethnic groups, religions, communities and regions, or to countries. Core values are those fundamental beliefs within which identity and cohesiveness are rooted. While core values are difficult to change they are rarely static. In fact, given drastic alterations in the social or environmental context, changes can be quite drastic, especially if incentives to make change are strong. The move toward participatory communication for addressing diversity suggests that particularistic *value frameworks* would be accompanied by an associated set of universal values. If this is the case, then people will not only participate in identification of what information they need, but in the process of message development and construction itself (Nair/White, 1987a; White/Patel, 1988).

Viewed as *cultural renewal,* a participatory communication process would generate knowledge for community action through a process of dialogue and transactional communication among diverse cultural groups. The *dialectical process* would bring about reflective understanding of the cultural uniquenesses, diagnose social problems resulting from diversity and develop communication competencies among community groups as subjects in their own social change process. The *participatory process* would be liberating and enable individuals and groups to identify their uniqueness, to transform cultural symbols and subtle messages which previously reinforced differences or fostered oppressive power relationships. The *cultural context* of a community, since it is dynamic, would respond to interaction with people both from within and external to its sub-groups.

Our concept of a "*community*" is people living in a loosely defined geographic area who because of proximity come together to explore their cultural context, and their common needs, establish agreed upon goals for development, and provide support to individual and group action. Inherent in this concept of community is interaction and participation which facilitates a team spirit wherein people do not have to give up their cultural uniqueness but engage in dialogue about it. They will mesh diverse cultural perspectives and thus enable consensual development. The participatory system would be one which permits diverse people to work toward a common goal. Community thereby becomes a concept characterized by cooperation, dialogue, interaction, participation, and reflection. Rooted in diverse cultural orientations which provide nurturance for social, political and economic development, "community" embodies a set of universal values including freedom, equality, and social justice.

*If people within nations and communities are to compatibly relate and develop within a mutuality framework, then they must do so within the framework of interdependence.* Some unifying force is needed to provide motivation for facilitating such a relationship. Cooperation between local communities and larger structures is a necessity when resources are limited and without which the resulting conflict can be destructive and self defeating. This does not discount the importance of the notions of conscientization and empowerment through participatory research and alternative communication strategies. Conflict is endemic in the resultant social action catalyzed through these processes. Structural and cultural transformation can indeed be accelerated through confrontation of the unempowered many and the empowered few. It is the resultant power sharing that sets the stage for cultural renewal through participatory communication.

**Operationalizing the Cultural Renewal Model**

The generalized concept of *culture* is that it is that part of the environment which "man hath made." The generalized concept of *renewal* is to "bring back to an original condition of freshness and vigor." One might conclude that man needs to "make" and "re-make" in order to maintain the freshness and vitality of his/her environment. This is the essence of the *cultural renewal* concept. But operationalizing the concept for development communication purposes requires a complex set of dialogic, interactive and transactive processes (Nair/White: 1994).

Cultural change is generally thought of as a slow process --- often difficult to identify or track (Herskovits, 1973). However, fast developing transportation and communication technologies have brought about drastic changes in dimensions of time and space; "diverse modes of thought and behavior," worldwide, are in continuous interaction. This is the *multi-cultural reality* --- a global phenomenon. A result of modernization, communication and transportation have been accompanied by another critical revolution -- the confrontation of imperialism. Herskovits vividly states in his discussion of cultural diversity and world peace, that the collapse of classical imperialism is the "revolution of our day." The world's "powerholders" find it increasingly difficult to accept the people who they have long dominated and guided to "higher stages of culture and thus to an eventual future participation in world affairs" as equals. Cross-cultural communication transactions at a local community level have been altered in this process. Herskovits notes:

> That the problems raised by these multi-cultural realities have dimensions of an order of complexity far beyond our contemporary experience should but encourage us to marshall all our scientific skills to their solutions. The answer, when it comes, must be realistic and flexible. Above all, it must involve a reorientation in thought that, by giving full weight to the cross-cultural factor, will grant to all peoples their

> right of choice to identify their future with the continuities of their ancestral heritage (p. 74).

It is this kind of thinking that has inspired our endeavor to create a conceptual framework which could not only provide a "realistic and flexible approach to the problems of adjustment in a multi-cultural world," but also a relevant and understandable one which can be framed and implemented by people in communities. Ideally changes will be catalyzed from inside communities by indigenous intellectuals or concerned individuals who actively involve community members through participatory communication. Initially, the process might of necessity be catalyzed by external "renewal facilitators." But, through knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing and social action, various cultural segments of the community would enter into dialogue and become active in decision processes about their "world" (Nair and White: 1994).

The current perspective of development communication is toward participatory models which have the capacity for empowering the people to act in their own behalf and to catalyze renewal processes at micro and macro levels of the social structure (Academy for Educational Development, 1985; Rogers and Kincaid, 1986; Nair and White, 1987a,b). Bordenave (1994) believes that construction of a participative society requires a "change in mindset" and that "new norms must be established through dialogue, negotiation and consensus." These processes are all acts of communication. The establishment of these new norms to which he refers perhaps can come about as a result of participative communication processes. If this is to become reality then the "mindset" of people must change. They must believe they can alter their immediate environment through dialogue and community action. The people's role as "developers," must be recognized by power holders. Only then will the people have opportunity to fully participate and establish new norms.

The challenge for articulating a *participatory* paradigm is quite clear:

> In the light of the past failures and of the present dearth of resources, traditional micro-development strategies are no longer sufficient. New mechanisms need to be developed which empower the poor to exercise their full potentials and capacities. Policy makers need to identify new approaches which stimulate self-propelled, self-supported, and self-sustained development by the poor (Idriss Jazairy in Lionberger, 1989, Foreword).

This puts the charge for actualizing participatory development squarely back in the hands of the people themselves. Development communication theory then must address the issues of human behavior and relationships and the mechanisms which catalyze peoples' action.

**Definitions**

If one regards the cultural context as an "open system" using Lippitt's (1982) terminology, then it becomes clear that the context will be ever changing. We have adapted Gordon Lippitt's concept of organizational renewal to the development context thus providing the foundation for the cultural renewal perspective. Lippitt's approach concentrates on the importance of human resource development. His book, Organization Renewal, presents a systems model which addresses the changing perspectives in organizational life which relate to the process managing planned change. *Human systems renewal* is defined as:

> a holistic way of examining micro (individual) and macro (society) human organisms so as to understand their energy input and output leading toward their potential for directing or redirecting their energies toward increased effectiveness and great maturation.

Similarily cultural renewal takes a holistic view of communities assessing their cultural context through participatory research, critical reflection and analysis. Diverse cultural groups within a community then engaged in a dialogic, transactional, participatory communication process, aimed at problem solving through negotiation and consensus.

This process establishes new normative structures which are liberating, emancipating and egalitarian for the participating cultural groups.

A "renewal facilitator" is a person who catalyzes renewal through initiating an action, process, or activity intended to bring about cultural and strutural change. This person can be internal or external to the system. The role embodies a combination of behaviors similar to that of "social animator," "cultural sensitizer," "motivator," "resource linker," or "development catalyst."

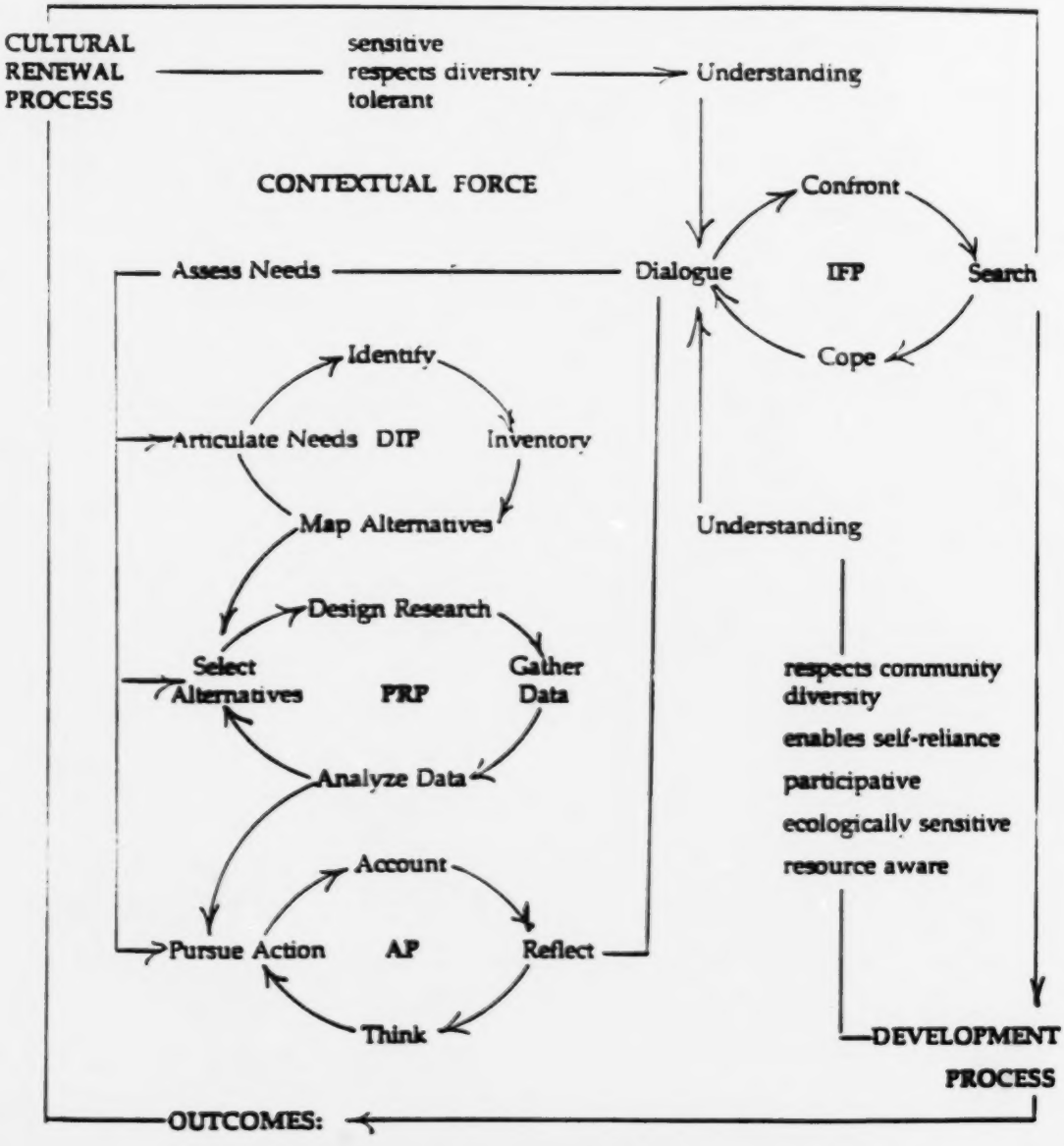
*Cultural renewal* takes place through a dynamic, ongoing, interfacing process which undergirds and simultaneously anchors social, economic and political development. The *Cultural Renewal Model* presented in Figure 1 depicts the interfacing process and the sub-processes which characterize the interrelationship of the cultural renewal and development processes. It is only through the basic interfacing process, previously explained, that other processes can be activated and maintained as sub-systems.

[Insert Figure 1]

The cultural renewal process is sensitive to human needs, respects the cultural diversity of various ethnic, religious, social or kinship groups. Tolerance for and appreciation of differences is inherent in the process. Understanding emerges from these characteristic elements of the process. Similarly the development process is resource aware, ecologically sensitive and participative, enabling self-reliance and respecting community diversity. This provides the basis for understanding. These understandings converge through the interfacing process (IFP) and characterize the contextual forces at play when the two processes are merged.

The active interfacing depicted in this model brings people together initially to talk

Figure 1: Cultural Renewal Model/Nair and White (1994)




- Harmonious, supportive, creative inter-relationships
- Cultural creation and preservation
- Operational "alternative communication" among the people
- Establishment of common development goals — social, economic, political — rooted in shared cultural context
- Strong community foundation for implementing action alternatives to achieve development goals
- Simultaneous action on cultural and econonomic development projects

about their mutual concerns and needs can be accomplished in a wide variety of ways. The leadership of trained development catalyst should pave the way for local leadership to emerge. In this model, needs assessment which incorporates both cultural and economic development is a simultaneous and/or parallel activity. The question as to what needs to happen in order for people to understand their differences which are culture based and what has to happen in the community to provide resources needed to live in harmony is not a simple one. But a systematic needs assessment activity will ultimately produce a list of agreed upon needs. These must be diagnosed, researched and acted upon within a framework of shared common goals.

The *Cultural Renewal Model* then is based on a communication process activated by people themselves, acknowledging that resources come from both external and internal sources. The internal unit of renewal is the micro-level community. The external renewal facilitation may come from government, non-government agencies or from internal forces within the community.

Since the process is "goal-oriented" it requires ongoing dialogue -- communication transactions among the people, sitting together, face to face, identifying those common goals which they wish to pursue. This can be orchestrated by an individual or group as the "renewal facilitator." The *process* identifies change needs, confronts the forces which drive or restrain making changes, creates alternatives for local action and enables the appropriate course of action for implementing the change --- all within the framework of preserving cultural integrity and inter-cultural harmony.

**The Interfacing Process (IFP)**

*Interfacing* is a shared communication experience --- an exercise in developing respect, building trust, clarifying expectations and arriving at shared understandings

which lead to cogenerative power-sharing and action based on consensus (Lippitt, 1982:81-108). Successful dialogue depends upon *supportive communication* (Gibb:1981). *Interfacing* is the key element of communication leading to an understanding of diversity. It is a process of interpersonal dialogue, confrontation of differing perspectives and points of view, searching for relevant or useful information and coping with the realities of the dialogic interchange. The constraints on the dialoguing actors are self-image, personal needs and values, expectations, goals, standards and norms and perceptions. The interfacing process meshes information, understanding and knowledge of the past with experience, new information, emerging understandings and new knowledge acquisition of the present (Lippitt, 1982).

Shor and Freire (1987) note the essential nature of *dialogue* saying that "dialogue is itself creative and re-creative" --- a notion very close to seeing dialogue as instrumental in a renewal process. In Freire's words: "Dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as beings of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has an individual dimension" (p. 4).

Probably the most difficult aspect of the process is to maintain a non-judgmental attitude because communication is "inevitably evaluative." Lippitt says:

> Because each participating entity has a right -- in self defense -- initially to expect the other to seek an advantage, it is incumbent upon both to contribute a modicum of trust, not as a gamble but in demonstration of caring, and to suspend judgment until understanding is as complete as possible....Strangely enough, it is not the absolute truths with which we abide that cause our travail, so much as it is interpretations of these truths (p.105).

In the *process of interfacing*, goals are identified and shared, problem solving emerges and experimentation, flexibility, and spontaneity develop. All appropriate resources are utilized in the communication transaction incorporating a problem-posing and a

problem-solving approach. Since judgmental behavior is not present, social trust (and/or task trust) is established with minimum attempts to control behavior. It is a process of "jointly coping with a solution to understood problems." Protecting one's own independent thinking and justifying positions is important to preserve one's autonomy. However, in the process of interfacing there is an "unfreezing, change, and refreezing" process in a Lewinian sense which results in modifying one's independent thinking. This modification obviously takes on elements of thinking offered by the second party in the interfacing process.

Finally, the interfacing process requires **openness**. Using Lippitt's explication:

> Open communications is confronting the "self-fulfilling prophecy" nature of interface....An effective information system is essential, but can only be as good as the data, the trust, and the problem-solving skills of those who utilize such a system (p. 107).

As was suggested earlier, successful interfacing does not come naturally. The process can be taught through information and practice, along with role modeling. *Dialogue* is the critical element of the model upon which other elements depend. Dialogue is at the heart of understanding and is essential to every communicative act in the ongoing cultural renewal process. *It is the interfacing process which is ongoing as a part of every other process in the Cultural Renewal Model.*

The interfacing process requires *supportive communication* to avoid arousing defensiveness in others. Gibb (1961) characterized the communication behaviors we view as necessary for an effective renewal dialogue and supportive climate for communication:

1. *Description vs. Evaluation.* A dialogue which factually describes one's traditions, heritage, or values offers information upon which groups can select and build. Evaluating the worthwhileness however, without factual information

tends to bring about defensiveness.

2. *Problem Orientation vs. Control.* An interaction which seeks to jointly define and solve a problem rather than coerce in a pre-determined direction usually leads to mutually acceptable courses of action.
3. *Spontaneity vs. Strategy.* A plan which emerges spontaneously through dialogue is more likely to trigger enthusiasm, commitment and feelings of equality. Resisting strategies which are imposed is often a result which grows out of distrust, suspicion, gimmickry and personal vested interest.
4. *Empathy vs. Neutrality.* Human communication interaction which seeks mutual understanding cannot be neutral. In sharing expectations in a cultural renewal context, strong commitment to one's own background would bring about empathy for another's commitment. "I don't care about..." or indifference diminishes the importance of sharing and sorting out factors of mutual importance.
5. *Equality vs. Superiority.* Superior, ego-centric behavior quickly diminishes self-esteem and communication confidence in another person. A spirit of equality emerges from respect, concern and caring for the thoughts and feelings of dialoguing actors in the renewal process.
6. *Provisionalism vs. Certainty.* An attitude of extreme confidence or dogmatic point of view hampers dialogue in the process of interfacing. Approaching each interaction with an open-mind and willingness to entertain several alternatives as viable reduces the defensiveness in dialogue.

Moving group relationships to the maturity required for effective renewal process can be accelerated when the interacting members are supportive. Learning how to be a supportive communicator is an up-front objective in the renewal effort. Through practicing supportive dialogue, individuals would become more accepting of themselves and of others resulting in increased self-confidence in individuals of a

community. Increased levels of trust and tolerance would spiral into a healthy interdependence simultaneously allowing for cultural diversity and richness. Such an environment would enable consistent and continual individual and communal progress moving steadily toward increased power to shape the environment.

**The Diagnostic Process (DIP)**

Essentially in the diagnostic process systematic relevant questions regarding needs and alternatives for meeting those needs are asked. These are generally framed within a problem solving framework. Separate questions are asked regarding the tasks and the process of meeting needs; both keep awareness of cultural effects and development alternatives in mind. Figure 1 shows that four definite goals must be accomplished through diagnostic processes (DIP).

Articulate Needs. In a group process of articulation, i.e., processing information regarding needs, it is important that at the offset everyone understands each need which has been stated. Full information must be made available at the beginning of the diagnostic process before the need can be clearly articulated: What is the exact nature of the need to be addressed. The outcome of this phase of the process is a clear statement of the need --- a definition which can be understood and agreed upon by both the external facilitator and the people.

Identify. Based on available information regarding needs, those people affected are identified. The change issues are identified. This would include identifying the need for change, openness to change, potential resources available for making change and the probable commitment for change among specified individuals or communities. The outcome of this phase is simply a detailed appraisal of who has the need, how widespread it is and an understanding of the change issues.

Inventory. This phase implies a complete accounting of the ideas surrounding the need. Ideas regarding the various ways needs can be met, a pooling of information from all available sources. This is not a systematic research phase but instead maps out the various aspects of the identified needs, the perceived magnitude of the needs and potential acquisition of resources to meet these needs. The outcome of this phase is that a wide range of people become aware of needs and ideas are generated from all possible corners of the community.

Map Alternatives. In this phase, through dialogue, as many possible viable alternatives as possible are mapped out to focus on each specific set of needs identified. This perhaps would also entail some tentative prioritizing of the needs. The outcome would be a specific set of guidelines which would become the parameters for the participatory research process. Diagnostic "feed forward" would become the framework for the participatory research process.

**The Participatory Research Process (PAR)**

Participatory research methodologies grew out of the need for research findings to be more relevant to people's needs. Their principles are based on active involvement of people who are likely to benefit from or be affected by research outcomes. People act on their own or become partners with the scientist in identifying the problem, selecting research approaches, gathering data, analyzing that data and determining how research findings can be used to benefit themselves, or their communities (Tandon: 1981).

Participatory research as a radical approach has demonstrated that it is possible to speed up and control change via participatory communication which is dialogic and connected among members of a cultural community. The liberative content of the participative process would catalyze cultural transformation. Witness the Bhoomi

Sena movement in India which brought the Adivasis -- aborigines of India -- into a position to preserve their tribal heritage and assert their rights to community. Through a process of conscientisation, self-reflected critical awareness was generated. Twenty-four villages participated, dialoguing about problems, solutions and relationships. Through mutual discussion a class-analysis of the area took place which lead to definition of the oppressed and the oppressors (De Silva, et al., 1982).

Basic cultural transformation is obtained through the process of dialectics resulting from democratic interaction and transactional communication between powerholders and the powerless of a community. One strong unifying force would be cultural commonalities which provide a foundation for shared understandings so necessary for affecting communication among the development "actors" of the community --- the powerholders and the newly empowered.

Participatory research, within the *Cultural Renewal Model*, achieves many of the purposes outlined by Tandon (1982). Methods may serve many purposes:

- promote the production of *collective knowledge*: the investigation and presentation of a social reality by the group(s) living it, with the same sense of *group ownership* of the information;
- promote *collective analysis*: the ordering of information in ways useful to the group in examining their reality;
- promote *critical analysis* by groups and individuals: using the ordered information to determine the root causes of problems and issues apparent in the constituency, with a view to finding solutions to them;
- promote the *building of relationships* between personal and structural problems as a part of the collective problem solving process;
- link *reflection and evaluation* with action, taking time to ask who, what, why, where, when? (p.6)

Kothari (1988) notes that a participatory researcher should make sure that methods

"complement rather than supplant indigenous forms of expression, communication, discussion and decision-making."

The participatory research process (PAR) begins with alternatives outlined through the diagnostic process. Research is designed, data gathered and analysed. Again, the research process is characterized by the dynamics of interfacing.

Select Alternatives. The alternatives selected for the research process will in turn become the basis for action projects to be undertaken in the development process. Criteria for selection of alternatives will be contextually determined. This is an extremely critical point of the cultural renewal process. Criteria must reflect the sensitivity regarding people and the ecology of the community. Choice without bias should be the outcome.

Design Research. While the selection of alternatives can rest largely in the hands of indigenous facilitators, designing research, will no doubt need more active involvement of a trained researcher to backstop the research process. This becomes a cooperative and collegial effort for renewal facilitation between the external scientist and the indigenous "researcher" who has high interest in the focus of the research.

Gather Data. People of the community can be trained in data gathering. Because of their rapport in the community, they will be extremely effective in this stage of the process and could bear the largest share of the responsibility for gathering, collating and organizing the data.

Analyze Data. The analysis phase would again be a co-endeavour with the trained scientist. The outcomes of data analysis is to provide full information upon which action projects can be based.

The participatory involvement of people in the process and in assuming leadership is very much a part of their growth and can be a giant step toward building self-reliance. Like every other process in this model, PAR is ongoing, dynamic, and continually focused on enlightenment of cultural development and economic development goals. Research data collection would be ongoing, and a data bank accessible at all times to provide information for any action project undertaken.

**The Action Process (AP)**

Pursue Action. Development of any description requires action. But action in this model has some distinguishing features: it is needs based, it is culturally specific, it is focused on development which has specific goals, arrived at through collective dialogue and/or consensus. The projects really emerge from the diagnostic process with some fairly specific courses of action outlined. Thinking through courses of action, pursuing the action, evaluating and accounting for action projects implemented and reflecting on the outcomes are the phases of the action process.

Think. While it might be assumed that solid thinking precedes action, this has not necessarily characterized development endeavors of the past. Even though solid data, good leadership and guidance, adequate resources and human energy may be available, they are often miserably orchestrated and result in failure. By stipulating a specific step in the model for thinking, its importance is underscored. Good thinking and sharing of perspectives via dialogue of the interfacing process will ensure action taking which is well planned and executed.

Account. Accountability has many dimensions and requires an ongoing evaluation plan as a part of the action process. The accountability stage of an action process will cycle back into the participatory research process regularly. Evaluation and accountability systems, when designed by the people who are affected by them, are

likely to be highly realistic as well as rigorous. In the case of economic development this would mean that available resources are optimized for benefit of the people.

Reflect. Reflection as noted by Freire is a strongly significant part of liberation of the individual. It is through reflection and introspection that insights are gained. This phase of the action process will set in motion higher levels of knowledge which in turn recycle back into a re-definition and a refinement of needs assessment. This is a decisive point which will enable continuing successful development efforts.

**Assumptions and Anticipated Outcomes of the Cultural Renewal**

In presenting the *Cultural Renewal Model* we are making some important assumptions. We assume that people naturally avoid contact and communication with people they perceive as different. Individuals must make a conscious effort to develop "approach behavior" rather than "avoidance behavior." Through an interfacing process initiated at the local level, it is possible to confront diversity, identify cultural uniqueness and shared traditions, using the understandings selectively as a base to create new infra-structures which will facilitate both technological innovation and cultural innovation for a community. Democratic and scientific values can be anchored in cultural values which are universal and yet acknowledge (and encourage) cultural diversity. It is recognized that there will be conflict in bringing about cultural renewal but that which people can find ways to resolve via the process of interfacing.

In essence, by laying out this interface of the two processes --- cultural renewal and development --- we are making the statement that only development which builds on diversity and is framed within the cultural expectations of indigenous people can be fully successful. By focusing on cultural renewal, and on the interfacing process itself, the dialogue of diversity can unfold. When viewed from the perspective of a systems

model, we realize that the processes we envision move both in linear and cyclic fashion and simultaneously produce a dynamic force for change. The dominant outcome is the ability to manage diversity and thus arrive at a cultural creation of community which preserves harmonious, supportive, creative inter-relationships.

New "alternative communication" networks and media can become operational and be controlled by the people. Together they can arrive at common goals and act on those goals when they are rooted in a shared cultural context. Over time a strong community foundation for action can be established. If this mode of operation becomes a norm, then indigenous leadership can effectively perpetuate ongoing renewal in the community context. Goals of social justice and equality will be met when there is a structure for sharing common values, developing harmonious relationships which blend diversity. Ultimately, this on-going process will empower people to control their own lives and become fully functional community citizens.

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